## NEW BOOKS.

### A Queer Mary Wilkins Story.

The new Mary Wilkins story, "By the Light of the Soul" (Harper & Brothers), calls for many tears. It records a number of marriages—not that we mean to suggest here by the association of these words any idea of cause and consequence, but there are marriages and there are tears in the story. It is remarkable with what persistency the heroine of the tale, Maria Edgham, is thwarted in her natural and apparently modest desire to be happy. The gray tints of life are not thought to distress children particularly, but Maria, even as a little girl, had an imagination which made her vulnerable. She suffered as the poets do with visions of much poignancy. She was a good deal of a trouble borrower, and she had immediate troubles besides.

Maria's mother was a New Englander transplanted in New Jersey. Her heart was good, her conscience and her tongue both sharp. It is a question whether Maria's pleasure derived from wearing her pink gingham dress surreptitiously to prayer meeting was greater than Maria's unhappiness when her mother found her out and rebuked her. "That was the reason why you went out the other door then. I wondered why you did. Putting on that new pink gingham dress that I had to hire made, trimmed with all that lace and ribbon, and wearing it out in the evening, damp as it is to-night! I don't see what you were thinking of, Maria Edgham." We can hear the New England voice, ringing high and clear, supported terribly by justice.

Mrs. Edgham died that same night, and there is a long account of her death, minute, realistic, pathetic, highly disturbing. At one point in the unsparing description Maria sits at her chamber window watching. The day is just beginning to break. "She could distinguish things quite clearly. She heard the rattle of wheels, and thought it was her father returning with Dr. Williams, but instead it was the milkman in his yellow cart. He carried a bottle of milk around to the south door. There was something horribly ghastly in that everyday occurrence to the watching child. She realized the interminable moving on of things in spite of all individual sufferings as she would have realized the revolution of a wheel of torture. She felt that it was simply hideous that the milk should be left at the door that morning, just as if everything was as it had been. When the milkman jumped into his wagon, whistling, it seemed to her as if he were doing an awful thing. The milk wagon stopped at the opposite house, then moved on out of sight down the street. She wished to herself that the milkman's horse might run away while he was at some door. She felt a futile rage, like that of some little animal trodden under foot. A boy whom she knew ran past whooping, with a tin pail, after the milkman. Evidently his mother wanted some extra milk. The sun was reflected on the sides of the swinging pail, and the flash of light seemed to hurt her, and she felt the same unreasoning wrath against the boy. Why was not Willy Royce's mother sick, like her mother, instead of simply sending for extra milk? The health and the daily swing of the world in its arc of space seemed to her like a direct insult."

The reflections plainly of a child with imagination. It is not to be doubted that she was keenly capable of suffering. She suffered when, at the end of a year, her father, a gentle, handsome man, still young, married again. When it was known that he was going to marry again she crept into her aunt's bed and she and her aunt wept together. Of the aunt, a New England spinster, it is to be said that if her reasons for weeping were selfish, they were at least immediate and clear. She had hoped to be Maria's stepmother herself and had rearranged the fashion of wearing her hair to that end. Amid her tears she told Maria that the chosen one was Ida Slome, the handsome school teacher. When the child heard this she was quite overcome. "Maria lay stretched out stiff and motionless. She was trying to bring her mind to bear upon the situation. She was trying to imagine Miss Ida Slome, with her pink cheeks and her gay attire, in the house instead of her mother. Her head began to reel. She no longer wept. She became dimly conscious after a while of her Aunt Maria's shaking her violently and calling her by name, but she did not respond, although she heard her plainly. Then she felt a great jounce of the bed as her aunt sprang out." She had gone into a sort of nervous trance, and she only came out of it when her father, being summoned, appeared in bathrobe and pajamas and made her swallow a few drops of brandy out of a teaspoon.

Maria's beautiful stepmother had, in the expressive common phrase, "a smile that never came off." It is not likely that her heart was particularly warm and tender. She dressed Maria beautifully, but Maria never loved her. When a little half sister was born Maria determined on a course of rigid and everlasting hatred, but this she was not qualified to carry out. So far from being able to hate the baby, she was obliged to love it passionately. When the baby was about a year old (anybody reading carefully, we think, will be unable to discover that it could have been any older) it very curiously climbed aboard the steam cars and was carried off to New York. Maria, returning from school and learning of this, was desperate. She spoke her mind to her stepmother, who had taken up the pose of rocking herself with a measured swing in a rocking chair and looking fixedly at a Tiffany vase on the mantelpiece. "You are a wicked woman," said Maria, among other things. "Your mouth smiles, but your heart never does. Your own child is lost; you let her be lost. You didn't look out for her. Yes, your own child is lost, and you sit there and rock!" There were visitors present—several ladies; Maria was not deterred in consequence. She sniffed the air of the room and said further: "You have had beefsteak and fried potatoes cooked and you have eaten them. You have been eating beefsteak and fried potatoes when your own child was lost and you did not know where she was!"

This was a strong indictment, and we were not surprised to read that Maria after making it got on a train herself and went to New York to find the lost baby. It did surprise us, however, that Maria, so strong in that emergency, should have been weak to the point of absurdity in an emergency that befell soon after. A boy, Wollaston Lee, a schoolmate of Maria, went with her to New York. We will say, though it seems to be hardly necessary, that he had no purpose or desire to marry Maria at this juncture, nor had she any to marry him. Unhappily, and most strangely, they met a minister in the street, a little man full of gratuitous and misdirected purpose, who collared them and married them in spite of themselves before they could say Jack Robinson. At this point in the tale we ourselves were oppressed by a surpassing sense of wonder, protest and unbelief. Our powerful desire was to hand this highwayman, this road agent and outlaw in clerical form, over to the police or to the authorities connected with Bloomingdale, but this of course we could not do, and we were obliged to stand idly by and behold Maria and Wollaston prepared, without desire, consent, need, understanding or fee, for the sorrows that were to follow in the story.

Maria's father died. Maria's stepmother went to Europe and married a Scotchman. Maria joined her aunt in New England and became a school teacher. She wanted to marry George Ramsey, a rising young banker, but there, over her, hung the perpetual shadow of her marriage to Wollaston Lee. As soon as they were married she and Wollaston had run away from each other. They were children. They had been married by force and only in form. It does seem as though something nullifying and liberating might have been done in their case, but Maria was satisfied that she was not free to marry George Ramsey, and so she snubbed him, and he married Lily Merrill, a beauty of distinctly invertebrate character—quite gelatinous, indeed, and forever melted in tears.

But there was more sorrow for Maria than that which the astonishing little minister had put upon her. Wollaston Lee reappeared, a grown and beautiful young man, and he and Maria fell in love with each other. It might be supposed that here was a free way to happiness at last, but this was not to be. The baby half sister had grown up, and she fell in love with Wollaston Lee and Maria loved her so that she let her have him. What she did in order to allow Wollaston and her half sister to marry each other makes queer reading. It may not seem reasonable or possible to the reader, but at any rate it is certain that Maria had a wonderfully unselfish and kind heart. Altogether a surprising tale, and we do not believe that the author has ever written anything just like it before.

### New Cambridge Editions.

The University Press of Cambridge, England, is conferring a benefit on scholars and students by the handsome editions of authentic texts of English classics which it is issuing. Four volumes bearing that imprint come to us from the Macmillans.

Two of these appeal to bibliophiles especially, being printed in very limited editions with the new and beautiful Cambridge type, with wide margins and all typographical perfection. They are not facsimiles, but reprints of early texts, which will give to readers who cannot own the originals the feeling that they are handling something very like a first edition. One contains "Comus and Other Poems," by John Milton; the text made up from the editions of 1645 and 1673 and the autograph copy of the minor poems, but the spelling is in no way modernized. The other contains Bacon's "Essays," the text printed from a copy of the edition of 1625, with the fragment on Fame added from the 1657 edition. They are fine specimens of book making.

The other two volumes are part of the admirable and important series of "Cambridge English Classics." Mr. A. R. Waller edits a second volume of Abraham Cowley, completing that author's works, "Essays, Plays and Sundry Verse." The preface explains what editions have been drawn upon and the variants are appended. The series is above all intended to provide accurate texts and notes are therefore judiciously scarce. The ten volume edition of Beaumont and Fletcher, also edited by Mr. A. R. Waller, has reached Volume IV. This contains "Valentinian," "The Bloody Brother," "The Chances," "The Wild Goose Chase" and "Monsieur Thomas." The typography is very attractive and the price of the volumes remarkably low.

### John Fiske's Posthumous History.

The German original from which the elaborate "History of All Nations," edited by Prof. John Henry Wright (Lea Brothers and Company, Philadelphia), was translated and adapted made no adequate provision for the history of America. The publishers in their endeavor to make good the deficiency were fortunate enough to secure the services of the late John Fiske, and fortunate in his completing his manuscript, though he died before he had revised all the proofs.

No man did more to popularize the history of his country for this generation than Fiske did. He is always readable and his point of view is always broader than that of

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